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Department of State

INCOMING TELEGRAM

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~~T O P S E C R E T~~ MUSCAT 2811

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DEPARTMENT PASS THE WHITE HOUSE

EYES ONLY FOR THE SECRETARY, THE DEPUTY SECRETARY, UNDER SECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS AND NEA-SAUNDERS, AND PM FOR BARTHOLOMEW ONLY

WHITE HOUSE FOR BRZEZINSKI

E.O. 12065: RDS-1 9/27/10 (BUCK, STEPHEN W.) OR-M

TAGS: IZ, IR, MU, US
SUBJECT: ~~(TS)~~ OMAN TO GIVE IRAQ ACCESS TO FACILITIES FOR ATTACK ON IRAN

REF: (A) STATE 256498, (B) STATE 255589, (C) STATE 255539, (D) STATE 254661, (E) STATE 255618, (F) MUSCAT 2782

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1. ~~(TS~~-ENTIRE TEXT)

2. CHARGE SAW MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS ZAWAWI ALONE AT HIS HOUSE AT 10 AM LOCAL SEPTEMBER 27 TO MAKE DEMARCHES REFS B-D. ZAWAWI HAD JUST COME FROM SPENDING

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE GUIDELINES, JULY 21, 1997
BY B NARA, DATE 7/28/2016

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FRIDAY IN SALALAH WITH THE SULTAN. ZAWAWI SAID HE WAS GLAD TO SEE ME BECAUSE HE HAD A MESSAGE TO CONVEY (BESIDES CANCELLATION OF HIS TRIP - SEE SEPTEL).

3. ZAWAWI SAID THAT OMAN HAD BEEN CONSULTING INTENSIVELY WITH THE IRAQIS FOR THE LAST 3 OR 4 DAYS ABOUT GRANTING IRAQ ACCESS TO OMANI FACILITIES. AS RESULT OF THESE DISCUSSIONS, SULTAN QABOOS HAD COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT IT WOULD BE IN OMAN'S, THE REGION'S AND THE WEST'S BEST INTERESTS FOR OMAN TO GRANT ACCESS TO OMANI FACILITIES TO IRAQ SO THAT IRAQ COULD TAKE OUT IRANIAN NAVAL BASES AT BANDAR ABBAS (KHOMEINI) AND ELSEWHERE. ZAWAWI SAID IRAQI OPERATIONS FROM OMAN (SEEB AND MASIRAH) WOULD TAKE PLACE WITHIN THE NEXT 48 HOURS. HE SAID THAT OMAN AND OTHER STATES IN THE REGION HAD WATCHED WITH DISMAY FOR THE LAST 18 MONTHS AS THE SITUATION WENT FROM BAD TO WORSE IN IRAN. OMAN HAD COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THE ONLY SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM WAS TO TEACH THE IRANIANS A LESSON WHICH MIGHT HELP LEAD TO A CHANGE IN THE REGIME THERE. OMAN LOOKED ON THIS ACTION AS PURELY A REGIONAL MATTER AND DID NOT EXPECT UNITED STATES SUPPORT - EXCEPT IN THE EVENTUALITY THAT IT WAS NEEDED FOR OMAN'S DEFENSE. ZAWAWI SAID THAT WHILE THE DECISION HAD BEEN TAKEN BY VERY FEW PEOPLE - "WE DON'T HAVE TO PUT UP WITH ALL THE PALAVER ELSEWHERE IN THE GULF" - IT HAD BEEN VERY CAREFULLY DONE.

4. IN COURSE OF HOUR LONG CONVERSATION, CHARGE HAD OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE ALL POINTS REFS B-D. CHARGE EMPHASIZED, WHEN ZAWAWI ALLUDED TO U.S. COMING TO OMAN'S DEFENSE FACT THAT OUR POSITION WAS NEUTRAL IN THE CONFLICT AND THAT WE HOPED FOR ITS EARLY RESOLUTION, NOT EXPANSION. CHARGE SAID HE WOULD OF COURSE HAVE TO ASK WASHINGTON FOR INSTRUCTIONS

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BUT EXPRESSED VIEW THAT GRANTING ACCESS TO FACILITIES TO THE IRAQIS WOULD ONLY WIDEN THE CONFLICT, MAKE IT LESS LIKELY TO BE RESOLVED AND POSED GRAVE RISKS FOR FREE TRAFFIC THROUGH THE STRAITS OF HORMUZ. ALSO, SINCE OMAN WAS ALIGNED IN IRANIAN EYES WITH THE UNITED STATES, ANY KIND OF OPERATION FROM OMAN COULD POSE GRAVE RISKS FOR THE FATE OF THE U.S. HOSTAGES. ZAWAWI SAID HE FELT THAT IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR THE IRAQIS TO USE OMANI FACILITIES WITHOUT NECESSARILY BEING DETECTED AS HAD HAPPENED IN THE CASE OF OUR USE OF FACILITIES EARLIER. AS FOR HORMUZ, HE WENT OVER WELL-KNOWN OMANI POSITION THAT WHAT WAS NEEDED WAS BEEFING UP OMANI CAPABILITIES IN HORMUZ - A MATTER THEY HAD RAISED WITH US LONG AGO. ZAWAWI EXPRESSED VIEW THAT AS FAR AS FREE PASSAGE OF HORMUZ WAS CONCERNED, MAIN THREAT WAS THE IRANIANS AND THEREFORE TAKING OUT THE IRANIAN NAVAL FACILITIES WOULD BE THE BEST WAY TO ELIMINATE IT. CHARGE RESPONDED THAT TO DATE THE IRANIANS HAD NOT DONE ANYTHING TO BLOCK PASSAGE THROUGH THE STRAIT AND SUCH ACTION AS ENVISAGED BY OMAN AND IRAQ SEEMED LIKELY TO ONLY POSE DANGERS, NOT TO HELP THE SITUATION.

5. TENOR OF CONVERSATION THROUGHOUT WAS FRIENDLY. CHARGE ASKED IF THERE WAS ANY POSSIBILITY OF DELAYING IRAQI ACTION. ZAWAWI DID NOT GIVE A DIRECT REPLY, BUT INDICATED THAT HE WOULD BE AVAILABLE TO SEE HE AT ANY TIME. HE NOTED THAT PRECISELY BECAUSE OMAN WAS SENSITIVE TO ALLEGATIONS OF INVOLVEMENT WITH THE U.S. IN WHAT IT VIEWED AS ESSENTIALLY A REGIONAL MATTER AND ALSO BECAUSE OF THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION, SULTAN QABOOS HAD DECIDED THAT HE SHOULD NOT SEE THE SECRETARY ON SEPTEMBER 29.

6. CHARGE REPEATEDLY STRESSED THE DANGERS THAT PROPOSED OMANI ACTION WERE LIKELY TO ENTAIL AND OUR DESIRE FOR PROMPT INTERNATIONAL ACTION TO DEESCALATE THE CONFLICT. ZAWAWI'S RESPONSE TO THIS WAS THAT THE IRAQIS HAD INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT MEDIATION - ISLAMIC, UN

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OR OTHERWISE - BUT THAT IT WAS THE IRANIANS, MOST RECENTLY TO THE PRESIDENT OF PAKISTAN, WHO HAD REFUSED. OMANI SUPPORT FOR IRAQ WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR OMAN TO INTERVENE WITH IRAQIS ON OUR BEHALF LATER TO END THE CONFLICT, ZAWAWI ARGUED. WHILE HE SAID THAT THE DECISION WAS FINAL AND HAD BEEN TAKEN BY HIS MAJESTY, I BELIEVE THAT A FIRM, IMMEDIATE DEMARCHE ON OUR PART MIGHT HELP. I BELIEVE AT A MINIMUM THAT WE SHOULD DISABUSE THE OMANIS OF THEIR UNDERSTANDING THAT WE WOULD COME TO THEIR DEFENSE SHOULD THEY NEED IT AS A RESULT OF THEIR OFFERING FACILITIES TO THE IRAQIS IN AN ATTACK ON IRAN; A FIRM MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY OR A HIGHER LEVEL TO ZAWAWI AND/OR THE SULTAN WOULD HELP. ZAWAWI GAVE ME THIS INFORMATION IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE. IT IS OF COURSE IMPERATIVE THAT NOTHING ON THIS SUBJECT BE DIVULGED.

7. COMMENT: OMANIS HAVE CAUGHT A BAD CASE OF HUSSEIN'S ENTHUSIASM FOR THE IRAQI CAUSE (REF E). THEY SEEM TO THINK THAT BY HELPING THE IRAQI CAUSE THEY CAN BE BROUGHT IN FROM OUT OF THE COLD AS FAR AS IRAQ IS CONCERNED. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, OMANIS HAVE HAD TO PUT UP WITH CONSIDERABLE FLAK IN THE PAST FROM IRAQIS FOR GRANTING U.S. ACCESS TO FACILITIES. THEY PROBABLY FEEL THAT GIVING ACCESS TO THE IRAQIS IS A WAY TO AVOID SUCH CRITICISM IN THE FUTURE. I BELIEVE OMANIS HAVE BADLY MISJUDGED THE SITUATION AND SHOULD BE TOLD SO IMMEDIATELY.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: REQUEST IMMEDIATE GUIDANCE. I SHOULD BE ABLE TO SEE ZAWAWI ANY TIME OF THE DAY AND NIGHT. SEEING SULTAN WILL BE A BIT MORE OF A PROBLEM, AS HE IS IN SALALAH, BUT THERE IS FAST COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ZAWAWI AND QABOOS.

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9. AFTERTHOUGHT. OMANIS HAVE APPARENTLY NOT FOCUSED ON THIS, BUT IF IRAQIS DO USE THEIR FACILITIES TO ATTACK IRAN, OMAN MAY NOT BE ENTHUSIASTIC AT PROSPECT OF VISIT BY CHAIRMAN OF JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, GENERAL JONES FEW DAYS AFTER THE ATTACKS. ON OTHER HAND THEY MAY LOOK AT THIS VISIT AS JUST THE KIND OF TACIT INDICATION OF U.S. SUPPORT THEY WANT. SUGGEST IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION BY GIVEN AS TO WHETHER PRESENT OCT. 2 - 3 TIMING OF CJCS VISIT IS APPROPRIATE IN LIGHT OF WHAT ZAWAWI HAS TOLD US.

PLEASE PASS IISUN FOR THE SECRETARY.
BUCK

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